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**Senate Republican Caucus Chair**

Committees: Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance; Health and Long-Term Care;  
Ways and Means; Rules

**Jan. 30, 2009**

Dear Friends,

We're three weeks into the session and the legislative process is beginning to move very quickly. One aspect of the process, however, is not moving as rapidly as I would hope: an effort to cut state spending in this current budget cycle, which ends June 30. The earlier we take action, the less we will have to cut in the 2009-11 budget that starts July 1.

**Time is Money: Day 15 without a supplemental budget vote**

After the November revenue forecast we urged the Legislature to pass a pared down, fiscally responsible supplemental budget (the budget that runs through June) in the first week of session. We now have a little less than six months left in our current 2007-08 budget, which exceeds revenue at the time by \$600 million. If we enact ongoing savings of \$600 million now, it will save us \$2.4 billion in the 2009-11 budget.

**Senate approves "belt tightening bill"**

This week I supported the passage of [Senate Bill 5460](#), a bill that takes us in the right direction to reduce spending by \$105 million in the last six months of the 2007-09 biennium. SB 5460 freezes salaries for state managers; bans most official state-paid travel; prohibits equipment purchases for more than \$1,000; and re-institutes the state hiring freeze for most jobs (the freeze declared by the governor last fall was lifted in early January). We still have a long way to go, to address the \$600 million deficit in the current two-year budget cycle. Without spending reductions that go well beyond this legislation, the rainy-day fund may need to be tapped before we even get around to adopting a budget for the 2009-11 budget cycle. SB 5460 is now before the House of Representatives for consideration.

**Property tax bills receive a hearing**

On Wednesday the Senate Ways and Means Committee held a public hearing on three of the property tax bills I sponsored this year. Here is a description of those bills, all of which have bipartisan support:

- **Annual assessments.** [Senate Bill 5099](#) would require that assessors revalue property every year starting in 2014. This would avoid huge property tax spikes when property values go up, and help people avoid paying taxes for years on a higher value when property values have declined. Under the bill the Department of Revenue is asked to provide guidance and financial assistance to help county assessors make this change. It also requires the DOR to administer a grant program to assist counties with the schedule change.

- **Another annual assessment bill.** [Senate Bill 5368](#) would require annual revaluation of property for tax purposes and continue a \$5 fee on real estate transactions (currently set to expire in 2010) until 2013. Money from the fee is used for a grant program to help counties convert to an annual reassessment schedule.
- **Property tax reassessment “trigger.”** [Senate Bill 5425](#) would require that if the overall property values in a county drop by more than 10 percent in a year, then all properties must be revalued the following year. This would apply in counties that do not currently revalue properties annually.

I will keep you posted on any movement of these bills.

## More bills that I am sponsoring

Here are some other bills I am prime sponsoring this year:

- **Protecting recreational fishing opportunities.** [Senate Bill 5421](#), which I sponsored this year at the request of local sportsman groups, would create the Upper Columbia River Recreational Salmon and Steelhead Pilot Stamp Program. Program funding would come from a \$15 stamp required for people fishing in the area. Stamp revenues would go into a dedicated account used to fund additional salmon and steelhead fishing opportunities in the Upper Columbia River and its tributaries. The bill, which has bipartisan support, will be heard in the Natural Resources, Ocean and Recreation Committee on Monday, Feb. 2 at 1:30 p.m. For more information you can read my [news release](#) about the bill.
- **Bill to aid young drivers.** [Senate Bill 5469](#) would ensure that young drivers are not placed on probation if they are involved in an accident that is not their fault. The bill has been scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Transportation Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 3 at 3:30 p.m.
- **Protection when purchasing a vehicle.** [Senate Bill 5388](#) would require that motor vehicle dealers disclose, in writing, damage (repaired or unrepaired) when selling a car, including to another dealer. This bipartisan bill received a hearing in the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee on Jan. 26.
- **Ensuring training for home inspectors.** [Senate Bill 5644](#) would allow home inspectors to be able to take their training either in a classroom or online. Right now state law requires that they take that training in a classroom. This presents a hardship for some of the people in the 12th District who wish to receive this training because the only class is offered several hours away. Senate Bill 5644 has been referred to the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

## Bills would recognize hydropower as renewal energy source

Did you know that in Washington clean, renewable hydroelectric power, which meets about 80 percent of our state’s power needs, is not recognized as a renewable resource? That’s something I’ve been working to change for years. We should recognize this incredible resource for what it is: a clean, renewable source of power that provides us with affordable electricity and offers Washington a competitive advantage when it comes to recruiting businesses and creating jobs.

I co-sponsored four bills this year that would accomplish this goal:

- [Senate Bill 5137](#) – Expands renewable energy sources;
- [Senate Bill 5280](#) – Recognizes conservation achieved beyond targets;

- [Senate Bill 5505](#) – Provides a consistent definition for renewable or alternative energy sources; and
- [Senate Bill 5345](#) - modifies renewable energy provisions.

Passage of these bills would ensure the most cost-effective approach to providing clean energy that protects our environment and heats our homes. All of these bills have been scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Environment, Water and Energy Committee on Feb, 4 at 3:30 p.m.

### **New report shows bill would help young adults find affordable health care**

Young people ages 19 to 34, who make up 51 percent of the state's uninsured, struggle especially hard to find plans they can afford. I introduced bills the past two years that would provide them with more options, and have done so again this year.

[Senate Bill 5052](#) would permit insurance carriers to design a special coverage plan for young adults ages 19 to 34 with their particular needs in mind. These plans, sold today in other states but not allowed yet in Washington, provide young people with tailored, affordable policies that cover the services they most desire. You can read more about the bill [here](#).

### **Want to see what's happening in Olympia without having to travel?**

TV Washington's Web site is a great way to stay on top of what's going on with the Legislature. Here you will find video and audio of the latest hearings, floor action and other events related to the Legislature and state government. You can even watch committee hearings live! I encourage you to visit their site at [www.tvw.org](http://www.tvw.org).

### **In closing...**

Thank you, as always, for your time and interest in what we're doing in Olympia. If there is anything my office staff or I can do for you, please don't hesitate to ask. I also hope you will stop by if you are in Olympia during the session. It's always so good to see friends from home.

All the best,

*Linda*

**LINDA EVANS PARLETTE**

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